THE SECRET OF THE SECTS:

A FEW WORDS ON MESMERISM, PSYCHOMANCY, ETC.

A CAUTION FOR THE TIMES.

SOME readers of these pages may possibly remember that in the summer and autumn of 1878, whole columns of the daily papers were several times filled with letters from their special correspondents or reporters on the subject of the Hampshire "SHAKERS," or followers of Mrs. Girling, to whose history and eccentric proceedings the attention of the public was at that time strongly directed.

The correspondent of *The Standard* of August 28th, writing from Lymington, ascribed to Mrs. Girling, the foundress of the Sect in this country, "a singularly piercing look," which he found was "*popularly supposed there to have a sort of mesmeric influenee on her followers;*" and again, in the same letter, he says that "she seemed to indicate *by one of her magnetic glanees, or by a sort of pass,* who were to dance," &c. The special reporter of the *Daily Telegraph*, in like manner, states that "the remarkable power she possessed *had been aseribed to mesmerism, animal magnetism,* and what not beside of 'isms' that are supposed to render possible an involuntary obedience" (*Telegraph* of September 24th). In thus writing, both correspondents seem to have unconsciously touched upon a fact of no small interest and importance; one, however, which is but little known or recognised in this country; viz., that MESMERISM or PSYCHOMANCY is still—as it has been for many centuries—the great secret of various Sects and Secret Societies; and that, at this present time, there are in this country and America alone, many millions of persons who are more or less subject to or affected by that occult agency.[1]

[1] The TABLET of August 2d, 1879, remarks, that "The séances of the Spiritualists, their intercourse with unseen powers, the manifestation among them of

The author of a very interesting work, entitled "*Origines Protestanticæ; or, Suggestions for an Historical Inquiry into the Origin of the Protestant Religion*" (Longhurst, London, 1877), shows how the Mediæval Sects,—such as the Albigenses, the Waldenses, the Brethren of the Free Spirit, and others,—had derived their secret tenets and practices from the more ancient Gnostic and Manichæan heretics (regarding whom see Blunt's *Dict. of Sects*, &c.; Neander's *Church History*, and similar works); and in what manner those secret tenets and practices have been perpetuated amongst their modern representatives. It may be observed that, of the above-mentioned Sects, the Waldenses or Vaudois were generally regarded as the least obnoxious (see "*Facts and Documents Illustrative of the History of the Ancient Albigenses and Vaudois*," by the Rev. S. R. Maitland, D.D., late Canon of Gloucester); and one is sometimes reminded of the accounts given of them, in the writings of their contemporaries, by what has in late times been stated regarding the "harmless" Shakers of Mount Lebanon, and even the general mode of life of their adherents in this country—Mrs. Girling and her followers—as described in the columns of the daily papers above referred to. It is, moreover, not a little singular, that, as the secret influence acting upon these last-named fanatics is now recognised as being "*Mesmeric*,"[1] so, in former times, "popular sentiment," says the author of *Orig. Protest.*, "attributed to the *Waldenses*, who were numerous in the north of France and the west of Germany, *some undefined community of principles with the Magic Art*" (p. 325). In fact, so general was this belief regarding them, that, as the same writer and Hallam (*Middle Ages*, ch. vii., *note*) tell us, Witchcraft and Sorcery were popularly known by the name of "*Vaudoric*."

"The science of Animal Magnetism, set on foot by MESMER, was a formal attempt to revive a well-known branch of

impalpable presences, the mind-reading, psychomancy, and soul-charming of the Clairvoyants, and the abominable impurity which in many cases is associated with these things, are facts to which we may shut our eyes if we please. *But they are facts within the knowledge of millions, and powerfully affecting the thoughts and actions of millions.*" The Rev. A. G. KNIGHT (in *The Month*, June 1880, p. 214) observes that "Two of the greatest dangers of modern society are *resuscitated witchcraft* on the one hand, and denial of the Supernatural on the other."

[1] An Anglican Rector, writing in *The Guardian*, November 1882, states that, after close observation of the Sect in this country, he has arrived at a definite conclusion on this point.

RE1444

the magic art.[1] On the strength of this identity Ennemoser, a professor of magic, and author of an interesting history of the art (translated into English, and published in Bohn's *Scientific Library*), incorporates the Mesmeric system into the science of magic as an integral, and indeed principal part of it" (*Orig. Prot.*, p. 327). Mr. Bonwick, in his *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*, p. 339, cites "the profoundly learned author" of *Art Magic* as remarking of the ancient Egyptian magicians:—

"They were highly educated, scientific men. They understood the nature of the loadstone, the virtues of mineral and animal magnetism, which, together with the force of psychological impression, constituted a large proportion of their theurgic practices. They perfectly understood the art of reading the inmost secrets of the soul, of impressing the susceptible imagination by enchantment and fascination, of sending their own spirits forth from the body, as clairvoyants, under the action of powerful will—in fact, they were masters of the arts now known as Mesmerism, Clairvoyance, Electro-biology," &c.

There can be no doubt whatever that, in the present day, the practice of these occult arts is alarmingly on the increase; and that—far more frequently than the uninitiated have any conception of—they are being employed by the *Secret Societies* of this and other countries to injure persons who are obnoxious to them, as well as by fanatics and others for various delusive, immoral, and revengeful purposes.[2] In 1866, the

[1] The late Dr. GREGORY, Professor of Chemistry in the University of Edinburgh, says:—"There is, indeed, one useful application of our knowledge of MESMERISM which has already been made, and will yet be made to a greater extent; I mean that of explaining many things which to the ignorant appear supernatural, and which the knowledge of their real nature having, in earlier ages, and even down to a period not very remote, been considered as a secret, or mystery, and confined to certain classes of men, such as priests, adepts, magicians, sorcerers, and perhaps astrologers and physicians, . . . acquired the names of Magic, Sorcery, Witchcraft, and the Black Art. All sorts of necromancy, divination, and oracles, may be ranked in the same category; and it may be safely said that *the more intimately we become acquainted with* MESMERISM, *the more do we find that every notion which has prevailed among men in regard to those matters may be referred to natural causes connected with Mesmerism in some of its innumerable developments*" (*Letters on Animal Magnetism*, ed. 1877, p. 112). See also Dr. HERBERT MAYO'S *Truths contained in Popular Superstition, with an Account of Mesmerism*, 3d ed., pp. 181, seq.

[2] An Anglican clergyman, residing in London, informed the present writer that the practice of these occult arts is very common in that city; and an eminent London physician wrote in 1878:—"The whole subject in which you are interested is occupying considerable attention just now. I was only a short time since discussing this matter with a very intelligent man, who takes your view in many particulars. I have just returned from Paris, where Professor Charcot is giving a

learned Jesuit, Father Peronne, published his elaborate work on the subject, in which he insisted on the diabolical charac-

good deal of time to the investigation of the subject. . . . The question of sorcery and witchcraft will, I expect, with all other occult phenomena, come under Professor Charcot's investigation."

The writer of these pages has known more than one instance of these occult arts being employed for the purpose of injuring the Catholic religion, by making persons brought under their influence believe that they were being victimised by "the Papists." In one of these instances—that of a lady residing in the South of England, who had been injured by mesmeric influences many years previously—the mind was for a time quite unhinged, and one of the delusions infused into it was that of being persecuted by "Papists." The clergyman of the parish, who visited her during the early period of her illness, was a few months afterwards himself sent to the same lunatic asylum in which the doctors had thought proper to place her, and meeting her on one occasion, he assured her that he too had been "sent there by *the Papists.*" In another instance known to the writer, the agents of some Protestant or Anti-Christian Secret Society tried to infuse similar delusions into the mind of a person who was known to be contemplating submission to the Catholic Church, and for this purpose caused him to have dreams in which they themselves personated Catholic priests, Jesuits, &c. (This mode of imposing on victims, viz., *by false impersonation or suggestion*, is probably a very common one). Understanding the nature of the agency employed, and the designs of the persons who had attacked him, this individual did not succumb to the influence of the magnetisers so far as to lose his reasoning powers, but he has for years past continued to suffer from great nervous oppression and physical weakness (the heart and respiratory organs being seriously affected) resulting from the injurious mesmeric *rapport* established between himself and a number of persons hostile or unsympathetic. Is it likely that these cases are singular?

In a case different from the preceding, that of a lady known to the writer, the malign influence has been exercised during a period of more than twenty years, causing her frightful distress, mental and bodily. She believes that she was first subjected to it whilst staying at a hydropathic establishment in Ireland, and that she has been kept under it ever since by persons desirous of obtaining control over her person and property. In another instance, that of a young doctor who committed suicide, there was grave reason to suspect that the same occult agency had been at work, and to the present writer it has always seemed more than probable that the death of Mrs. Bravo, occurring in the midst of the so-called Balham mystery in 1878, and attributed without any reason whatever to intoxication or poisoning, was really caused by the mesmeric influence to which she had many years previously been subjected. The most injurious effects, even when not purposely caused, often follow the practice of mesmerism. ROSTAN, a high authority on the subject, says:—"As the result of it, I have sometimes seen the body suffer from most acute pains, obstinate headache and cardialgia occur, . . . prostration of the whole nervous system, great lassitude and debility, extreme emaciation, oppression of breathing and asphyxia. *I doubt not that death would follow if the magnetiser chose to paralyse the organs of respiration*" (Ap. Perronc, *De Virt. Relig. &c.*, p. 410). OLIVIER says:—"Et de la sorte va croissant (le désordre) *jusqu'à la prostration des forces, jusqu'à la décomposition du sang, jusqu'à une mort certaine et prématurée*" (*Traité du Magnét.*, p. 106). Dr. GREGORY, of Edinburgh, states again and again that many of the human ills formerly attributed to witchcraft and magic were really caused by the subjection of persons to magnetic influences, and in p. 108 of his work he remarks that

ter of these practices; and ten years later Cardinal Manning stated (*True Story of the Vatican Council*, p. 27), that "*Spiritism and Magnetism*" were reckoned among the flagrant ills under which modern society is suffering, and which were proposed to be discussed in the late Vatican Council.

In an article in the *Charing Cross Magazine* (March 1877), entitled "Spiritualism, a Satanic Agency," Mr. Greenwell estimates the number of "Spiritualists" (by which term Prof. Zerffi and others understand persons who practise or are deluded by certain forms of animal magnetism) as being "*about twenty millions*" in Europe and America; but independently of those so designated, there can be no doubt that immense evil is being caused to innumerable persons, and in a variety of ways, by these occult arts and practices, which have always been condemned by the Catholic Church as identical with sorcery and witchcraft,[1] but are now not only, as has been said, habitually employed in numerous Secret Societies and associations hostile to the Church and to Christianity,[2] but are also more or less openly avowed and practised by many individuals known to society, and even by

"Many persons, *considered insane*, appear, when we study the symptoms as they are described by writers on the subject, *to be, in fact, only in a peculiar mesmeric state:*" a remark which suggests that there may be many persons confined in asylums as lunatics, who are simply suffering from mesmeric or "odylic" influences, to which they had unconsciously been exposed, or by means of which, at the will of those in whose power they are, they are designedly made to exhibit some of the symptoms of confirmed insanity.

[1] "The belief that there was something *real* in these arts (magic, witchcraft, &c.) was apparently universal" in the Early Church. . . . "When after the conversion of Constantine such practices were found among professed Christians, the most strenuous efforts were made to suppress them by the teachers of the Church, and by legislators, both civil and ecclesiastical. They were denounced as remnants of idolatry and a practical return to it" (SMITH and CHEETHAM's *Dict. of Christian Antiquities*, pp. 1076, 1632, 3. A summary is given of the Ecclesiastical and Imperial legislation on the subject). On the "Spread of Magic" in later ages, see *Origines Protestanticæ*, chap. xi., in which also extracts are given from the Bulls published by POPES JOHN XXII. and INNOCENT VIII., denunciatory of the occult arts, through the practice of which, in their times, Christian society was everywhere suffering from the most grievous calamities.

[2] Father PERONNE cites various authorities to show that MESMER WAS A FREEMASON, and founded in France, in the year 1783, Masonic Societies, in which animal magnetism was taught and practised (*De Virtute Relig.*, 1866, p. 382, note). In a leading article of the *Standard* of September 13, 1878, an account was given of a "new religion" which has been founded in France under the name of "Esseno-Druidism." The *Standard*, quoting the prospectus, says:—"The institute at Saint Maur will be a spiritualistic seminary, a field for pneumatological and thau-

strong-minded persons of the female sex. Those most easily subjected to, and injuriously affected by, this agency are persons of a delicate, nervous constitution, and especially women; and it is important to observe also that the mesmeric power is capable of being *transferred to others*, and of being *immensely increased and concentrated by what is termed a "magnetic circle," i.e., by being exercised and brought to bear upon persons* [1] *by a number of mesmerists acting in union.*

It has been remarked that these occult practices were well known to, and were handed down by, many of the sects which caused so much trouble to the Catholic Church, from the first age, and throughout the whole mediæval period, to the time of the so-called Reformation. Of SIMON MAGUS, the first heresiarch, we read that "*he used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria; . . . to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries*" (*Acts* viii. 9–11; comp. *Gal.* iii. 1). The early Fathers give an account of the sect and school of sorcery founded by him. The author of the *Philosophumena* says:—

"The disciples, then, of this man celebrate magical rites, and resort to incantations. And they profess to transmit both love-spells and charms, and the demons said to be senders of dreams, for the purpose of distracting whomsoever they please" (*Adv. Hær.* l. vi. c. 15).

In all ages, those who "arose, speaking perverse things, to

maturgical experiments, a college of prophets and illuminati, guided by the rules of a wise discernment. The magnetic experiments performed by the Marquis de Puysegur . . . will be reproduced. A spiritualistic doctor will be attached to the establishment," &c.

[1] It is to be hoped that these matters will be thoroughly investigated and exposed by the recently established SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, of which the First Report was published by Trübner & Co. in October 1882. Professor BARRETT had on several previous occasions detailed instances in which complete *transfusion of thought and feeling* had been established between mesmerised persons and those who operated on them, or were put *en rapport* with them. Some years previously it had been remarked in Migne's *Dict. des Sciences Occultes*, that "Les rapports établis entre les magnetiseurs et les magnetisés livrent a peu près a la merci des premiers le charactère, les opinions, les inclinations, et jusqu'a la personne de leur sujets," &c. Dr. HERBERT MAYO states that "with persons rendered through use susceptible of mesmeric impressions, an effect may be produced by the habitual mesmeriser of the patient *at almost unlimited distances*," and that "it would be as easy for a mesmeriser to entrance, by a mental effort, a sensitive and habitual patient at *a hundred miles off* as at the end of the room" (*Truths contained in Popular Superstitions*, 3d ed., pp. 182–186). To show that the power of psychical attraction is "increased by its concentration on one subject, and *the*

draw away disciples after them" (*Acts* xx. 30), seem to have been men who possessed extraordinary magnetic powers, and, in many cases, to have been but the chief agents or tools of some previously existing conspiracy against the Catholic Church. Was not this evidently the case with the chief author of the "Reformation,"—LUTHER himself? We need not attach any importance to his own boast, "At first I stood alone," for, as Bossuet observed:—"A still greater apostasy [than that of the Albigenses and Waldenses] *had been hatching by means of those Sects.* The world, teeming with animosity, brings forth Luther and Calvin" (*Hist. of the Variat.*, b. xi. ch. 205). Who has not heard of Luther's colloquies with the Devil,—his statement that the Devil lay nearer to him than his wife Catherine—and of the lengthy discussion, gravely reported by himself, that he had with him, and by which he was argued out of his belief in the efficacy of the Sacrifice of the Mass? (See Bossuet, *Hist. of the Var.*, B. iv. ch. 17). Michelet, in his *Life of Luther*, fills many pages with the details regarding these matters, in Luther's own words. All such delusions are perfectly intelligible on the supposition that Luther was subject to, and excited by, the magnetic influence of some secret Sect or Society (the history of several other "Reformers" and their fanatical followers would furnish many similar instances); and probably no one who has read the works on Mesmerism and other occult agencies that have been written by Dr. Gregory of Edinburgh, Dr. Herbert Mayo, Professor Zerffi, and others, would have any hesitation about adopting that explanation of them.

Of the celebrated SWEDENBORG, the late German divine Görres observed, that "his ecstasies *may be best explained by Animal Magnetism*" (Möhler's *Symbolism*, vol. ii. p. 273); and probably the "speaking in unknown tongues" and "prophesying," to which pretensions have been made by the Irvingites, Shakers, and some other Protestant Sects, may all be accounted for in the same manner. The reader will hardly need to be reminded of the extraordinary psychical results which often attended the adoption of Methodism in its early

participation of a number of persons in one thought," he mentions instances in which *companies* of Mesmerists have silently and mentally driven subjects that were agreed upon into the minds of persons quite unconscious of being so experimented upon, but whose minds were actually influenced in the way designed.

days (see Lecky's *Hist. of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii. pp. 582–594), of the doings of the Welsh "Jumpers," of the "Revivalists" in America and Ireland, and, in these days, of the equally strange manifestations that have occurred amongst the followers of Mrs. Girling, and not a few meetings of the so-called "Salvation Army."

Probably many persons may have fallen under the influence of "Animal Magnetism" of some sort in their childhood, and may live unconsciously subject to it until their death. Regarding the matter from a religious standpoint, is it not thus that the apparently hopeless aberrations and obstinacy of so many followers of the 160 different Protestant Sects (enumerated in Whitaker's Almanack) are most probably to be accounted for? The author of *Four Years' Experience of the Catholic Religion*, when speaking of the "thraldom of Protestantism," says that his (a Protestant's) intellect

> "Is in bonds to some fearful delusion, which prevents him from attaining to any true philosophy on the nature and destiny of his species; . . . a sort of infatuation seems to possess him on the subject of the Church of Rome. . . . Some incomprehensible and subtle power binds down the non-Catholic intellect, and forbids it to employ its natural capacities with that vigour and independence which it claims to possess:"—

which reminds one of Father Faber's words, when, describing the power of "the world," he says that it seems to be "something which the existing generation of men always gives out from itself,—*a kind of magnetism of varying strengths and different properties*" (*The Creator and the Creature*, p. 399).

The works above referred to—Dr. Gregory's *Letters on Animal Magnetism*, Dr. Herbert Mayo's *Truths contained in Popular Superstitions*, Professor Zerffi's *Spiritualism and Animal Magnetism*, Father Peronne's *Prælect. de Virtute Religionis*, and the work entitled *Origines Protestanticæ*—all throw much light on a subject regarding which a strange amount of ignorance seems to prevail in this country; and the object of the present writer is rather to call attention to the facts contained in those works than to advance any novel opinions or theories of his own. In view of the increasing power of the SECRET SOCIETIES in this and other countries, he believes that the subject referred to deserves the most serious consideration of all who have at heart the eradication of vice and error, and the protection and well-being of Christian society.